MEETING SUMMARY

SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT & HOV PROJECT
Technical COMMITTEE
Museum of History and Industry, SEATTLE, WA
February 6, 2003 – 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

INTRODUCTION & MEETING OBJECTIVES

Les Rubstello, WSDOT-Urban Corridors Office (UCO), started the meeting by welcoming the committee and reviewing the current status of the project after Referendum 51. The objectives of the meeting included: review of the traffic reports; discussion of the proposal to drop the eight-lane alternative from the EIS; discussion of changes to the four-lane and six-lane alternative, including preliminary screening of the new six-lane alternative; review of recently completed water quality studies for the floating bridge; and an update on tolling studies. Final approval for dropping the eight-lane alternative would come from the Executive committee later in the spring. A date for this meeting has not yet been set.

REVIEW OF TRAFFIC REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATION TO DROP THE EIGHT-LANE ALTERNATIVE

Les Rubstello reviewed the latest six- and eight-lane volumes and travel times for eastbound and westbound traffic during the AM and PM. Special note was made of the eight-lane westbound AM results at I-5 and the eight-lane eastbound PM results at Redmond that both show severe congestion. Congestion at the west end is caused from four lanes of westbound traffic entering the southbound I-5 lanes and adding to the traffic already bottlenecked at the convention center in downtown Seattle. Congestion at the east end seems to be caused by four lanes of freeway traffic trying to enter the local street system of Redmond. A question and answer period followed.

Q – Was tolling used in the traffic model?
A – No.

Q – Was TDM and anticipated SOV reductions included in the model?
A – TDM has always been a part of the project but for the traffic modeling any reductions that might be anticipated were not coded into the model.

A review of travel times was made for all alternatives currently being considered. The results show that travel times get longer when more lanes are added, especially for the AM westbound traffic.

Q – Was the Sound Transit "North Link" included in the traffic modeling?
A – Yes.

Les gave a further explanation of the travel times. The travel times shown are an average of all vehicles, SOV, HOV, and transit. Separate travel times for HOV vehicles are shown in the report. HOV travel times are expected to perform well throughout the corridor for both of the alternatives that complete the HOV system, the six- and eight-lane options.

Q – Is there a preference for traffic performance? Is AM more important than PM? Is eastbound more important than westbound?
A – No preference is really given to any commute time or direction. The AM westbound performance, especially for the eight-lane option, really trumps the deck when it comes to evaluating the alternative from a traffic performance perspective. At some point the change to the interchange access will need to be approved by FHWA. Anything that is shown to breakdown I-5 traffic like the eight-lane is shown to do will definitely not be approved.

Q – How does northbound I-5 perform?
A – WB SR 520 to NB I-5 is metered by leaving in the one lane ramp, as is there today. This will prevent SR 520 from worsening I-5, but will not allow for much growth in this movement.

Q – Is the future widening of SR 202 coded in the model?
A – Yes, but is does not appear to make a big difference.

Q – Is the growth of the Union Hill / Novelty Hill areas accounted for in the model?
A – Yes. The growth forecast is done through the PSRC model. It is intended to account for all population and employment growth in the region, both the location and the amount of growth.

Q – Has the project team looked at eight lanes east of I-405 and six lanes west of I-405?
A – Yes, this has been considered but not studied. The project alternatives were all for the entire corridor, I-5 to Redmond. In the current funding climate we now feel we need to focus on a fundable project that includes the critical components of the project, replacement of the floating bridge and approaches and completion of the HOV system between I-5 and I-405.

No other questions remained concerning the traffic reports and consideration of dropping the eight-lane alternative from the EIS. Les asked the group if there was a consensus that we can drop the eight-lane alternative from the EIS. There were none opposed to this recommendation. Though an actual vote was not taken, consensus was reached that the eight-lane alternative could be dropped.

Additional eight-lane discussion continued.

Q – Will the EIS evaluate the expandable pontoons for eight lanes?
A – No, The EIS will state the floating bridge will be constructed to enable expansion for HCT only. No analysis for the use of the expansion will be included.

Q – Was the expanded I-405 used in traffic modeling?

A – No, the existing I-405 configuration was used. Expansion of I-405 will be discussed in the Cumulative Effects chapter of the EIS. A model run has been performed with an expanded I-405 and it does not make much difference to SR 520 performance.

Q – If I-405 is expanded, how much diversion from I-5 is expected?
A – Not sure. But we would expect some balancing of traffic volumes.

Q – What is the life span of an EIS?
A – Three years. After three years a reevaluation of the document is required to see if it still represents conditions and need at the time of writing.

James Leonard, FHWA, commented that FHWA would require solutions to mitigate the eight-lane traffic impacts at both I-5 and SR 202.

Someone stated that we need to make it clear to the public why the eight-lane alternative is being dropped.

Les next reviewed the local traffic report. He noted which local streets would be at service level E or F and which streets would be considered for improvements. Work still to do be done is a second round of work to verify the engineering plans work with the forecasted traffic volumes. Once that work is completed we can coordinate with the local jurisdictions to define local traffic solutions.

Q – How much transit was considered for the traffic modeling?
A – The model assumes an amount of transit. We have not input a transit service level. We do recognize transit routes and current service levels and have used these in the current designs on the table.

Someone suggested that the team should consider dynamic pricing to motivate driver behavior rather than just building more lanes. Tolling and pricing is certainly on the table although no specific tolling scenarios have been proposed for this project.

REVIEW OF MODIFICATIONS TO 4-LANE AND 6-LANE ALTERNATIVES AND PRELIMINARY SCREENING

The discussion moved to the four-lane alternative and how this alternative would be modified under the current funding climate. The four-lane alternative would remain as previously described with the following exceptions:

- No work east of 108th Ave. NE
- HOV lanes across Portage Bay would be dropped.
- Inside flyer stops at Montlake would remain as outside.

Jim Leonard asked if the four-lane alternative met the logical termini test. Les responded that yes, WSDOT thinks I-5 and I-405 are the logical termini.

Q – Does the four-lane make sense for delays and travel times?

A – The four-lane project really is a bridge replacement project and is not rally intended to address traffic issues. The fact that the four-lane will upgrade the facility to full standards will enhance traffic somewhat.

Q – What in the four-lane alternative improves HOV?
A – The four-lane alternative does not improve HOV, only rebuilds the existing HOV lane and maintains the current level of service.

The discussion moved to the six-lane alternative and how this alternative would be modified under the current funding climate. A description of how the six-lane alternative would be modified.

Six-Lane Elements Included:

- 6 Lanes, 24th Ave E to Bellevue Way incl. noise walls
- Roanoke and Montlake lids
- 4-Lane Portage Bay bridge w/possible WB and/or EB auxiliary lanes
- WB 520 to SB I-5 Express Lanes ramp
- WB HOV off-ramp to Montlake Blvd. and rebuild other Montlake ramps
- Bicycle/pedestrian path across lake
- Arboretum Ramps
- Bellevue Way flyer stops
- EB Direct HOV access to 108th Ave NE
- 4' buffer along right-side HOV lanes
- Expandable pontoons for HCT only
- 76th, 84th, & 92nd Ave NE lids

Six-Lane Elements Deleted:

- I-5 Ship Canal weave
- I-5 SB Mercer weave
- WB to NB I-5 Express Lanes
- I-5 Lid
- 8-Lane Portage Bay bridge
- Inside Montlake flyer stop
- 2nd Montlake drawbridge
- Direct HOV ramps to Montlake Blvd.
- Inside flyer stops at 76th and 92nd Ave NE
- Four-direction Bellevue Way I/C
- Direct HOV access to 108th Ave NE
- I-405 HOV to HOV ramps
- I-405 SB collector-distributor system
- Auxiliary lanes to 148th Ave NE
- Direct HOV access to NE 39th/Overlake P&R
- HOV & auxiliary lanes WLSP to SR 202

Les mentioned that a design charette for the Montlake interchange will be held on February 20th to work with the local citizens and the city. It hopefully will come up with some good ideas for improving traffic in this area.

Q – Will the six-lane included shoulders?
A – Yes, both 10' inside and outside shoulders by State design standards.

Q – Will the six-lane included expandable pontoons for eight lanes?
A – The project will include expandable pontoons for HCT only.

Q – How will the Portage Bay work be staged?
A – Half of the new bridge will be to the north. After building the north half, traffic would move to the new half while the remaining half is built. More overlapping will occur on the west end.

There was a question on east side design.
A – The east side is still in the picture. The six-lane alternative provides three lanes in both directions through the Points Communities.

Q – Where do the auxiliary lanes on Portage Bay go?
A – Only between the I-5 and Montlake ramps.

Q –How much impact to Points Drive will there be with the six-lane option?
A – Not sure, we will need to find out.

Q – What about swapping money for the 4' buffer for fixing the Mercer weave?
A – We think the cost of fixing the Mercer weave will be four times the cost of building the 4' buffer.

Les reviewed the screening report for the Modified Six Lane alternative (Modified Alternative 3). The report was handed out to all attendees prior to the start of the meeting and had not been distributed earlier. The intent of the report was to evaluate the modified version of the six-lane alternative against the criteria used for the original screening.

During the discussion, Les acknowledged the price shown in the report does not reflect the CEVP risk and escalation markups. It should be more in the range of $6 billon rather than the $3 billion shown.

Bernard Van de Kamp, City of Bellevue, expressed concern that the modifications to the six lane alternative whittle away too much of the project just to make a budget. What about the 108th I/C? What about the full Montlake I/C? What about the HOV access across Portage Bay Bridge? Fixing the Mercer weave? Bernard warned that we may nickel and dime the project too much and not fulfill the vision of the project. These project components are still important.

Terry Marpert, City of Redmond, expressed concern over not continuing to analyze the full six-lane project. By dropping the full six-lane alternative from the EIS we would not be ready to construct the full project or portions of what would be dropped by the modified alternative if funding for became available through outside sources such as Sound Transit. Terry thinks we need to analyze the full six-lane alternative now.

At this time WSDOT thinks it is important to propose a project that can be funded in the foreseeable future. Even if we analyzed the full six-lane alternative, the full project would never get built for so long that the analysis would need to be done again anyway.

Q – Will we meet again to discuss the modified six-lane alternate prior to the Executive meeting?
A – It seems there are enough questions on the table that we need to meet again specifically to discuss the modified six-lane option.

It was suggested that a better map with specific improvements shown on it would be useful.

Q – What will be the new eastern limit?
A – 108th Ave. NE

Eric Chipps, Sound Transit, commented that for the potential money available they think the modified six-lane alterative provides transit the best bang for the buck. They would all like the flyer stops and direct access, but if funding is not available Sound Transit supports the direction the project is going.

REVIEW OF FLOATING BRIDGE WATER QUALITY STUDIES

Greg Wornell and Paul Krueger, WSDOT-UCO, reviewed the AKART (All Known, Available and Reasonable Technologies) and water quality studies that have just been completed for the floating bridge.

The AKART study concluded that high-efficiency sweeping and modified catch basins alternative offers the most reasonable technologies for addressing water quality on the floating bridge, based on technical feasibility and cost effectiveness.

The water quality study concluded that, with application of the stormwater treatment alternative proposed by the AKART study, the three replacement bridge alternatives would have little or no increase in annual loadings of total suspended solids and metals compared to the existing SR 520 bridge. It also concluded that current acute and chronic water quality criteria for metals could be met with reasonably small mixing zones.

The next step for water quality will be a workshop addressing the design of the 1-mile long approach structure through the Arboretum. The purpose of the workshop is to advise the project on the best way to deal with stormwater from the structure.

It was emphasized that the project should not forget the east side in any further water quality studies. The Points Communities have several sensitive wetland areas they are concerned about preserving / protecting.

The Eastside water quality treatment will be land-based, and will meet all current water quality guidelines using standard BMPs in the current Department of Ecology manual. The current plan shows locations for treatment facilities.

The approach structure is a very different situation from the Eastside. It is surrounded by a sensitive area and does not have the same opportunities for land-based facilities as the eastside. In addition, because it is a structure, we have much more latitude for choosing

where we direct the stormwater by our design of the highway profile. Our decisions in designing the profile will have implications for the habitat underneath and adjacent to the structure and these issues will need to be balanced.

Kurt Buchanan, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, expressed interest in the existing Arboretum water quality. He is aware of storm drain outfalls in the Arboretum that smell like a sewer and any water quality treatment plans should consider these existing facilities. He also noted that the University of Washington has an ongoing storm drain system study that may be able to provide some good information.

UPDATE ON TOLLING STUDIES FOR SR 520

Les discussed current tolling information. Parsons Brinckerhoff will continue to study tolling for not only this project but also the region as a whole. WSDOT recognizes the SR 520 corridor is a prime candidate for tolling, but also expects some drivers will use other roads if only SR 520 is tolled.

RTID is expecting tolling as a revenue source from this project, assuming a total of about $700,000,000 from tolls.

Mike Cummings, in the WSDOT Planning & Policy Office, will also be pursuing a HOT lane study.

Q – Will the State analyze HOT lanes in the EIS?
A – No, not HOT lanes. At some point we will need to address tolling in the EIS. At this time we are not really sure what tolling on SR 520 means so this is work ahead of us.

Comment – If tolling is going to be the reality and tolling changes driver habits, then an analysis needs to be done to determine what really is the best investment in the world of tolling. All the analysis has been done with no tolling. If it is for real then maybe the method of analysis needs to be changed.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRESS TOWARDS A DEIS DURING 2003

Les reviewed work to come this spring and summer:

1. Additional water quality work for the west approach to the floating bridge
2. Modified six-lane alternative engineering
3. Lid configuration analysis

Meeting Adjourned

Present	Organization	Name
Technical Committee		
☑	Bellevue	Bernard VandeKamp (alternate)
☑	Clyde Hill	Mitch Wasserman
☑	FHWA	James Leonard
☑	FTA	Jennifer Bowman
	Hunts Point	Joe Willis
☑	King County/DOT	Ann Martin
☑	Kirkland	Dave Godfrey
☑	Medina	Shel Jahn
	Mercer Island	Richard Conrad
☑	NMFS	Kitty Nelson (alternate)
	PSCAA	Dave Kircher
☑	PSRC	King Cushman
☑	PSRC	Peter Beaulieu (alternate)
☑	Redmond	Terry Marpert
☑	Seattle	Dave Allen (alternate)
☑	Sound Transit	Eric Chipps
☑	U. W.	Peter Dewey
	U.S. Corps of Engineers	Jack Kennedy
	U.S. Coast Guard	Austin Pratt
☑	U.S. EPA	Krista Rave-Perkins
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife	Emily Teachout
☑	WSDOE	Terry Swanson
☑	WSDOFW	Kurt Buchanan
☑	WSDOT	Maureen Sullivan
	Wash. State Office of Arch. / Hist. Pres.	Allyson Brooks
☑	Yarrow Point	Len Newstrum
Other Attendees		
☑	WSDOT	Greg Wornell
☑	WSDOT	Les Rubstello
☑	WSDOT	Paul Krueger
☑	Seattle DOT	Trevor Partap
☑	Transportation Choices C	Peter Hurley
☑	Madison Park	Michael Anderson